

## **Break Out of the Food Rut**

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Do you consider yourself to be a healthy eater? Take this simple quiz and see how you fare.

- Do you eat a variety of foods or find yourself eating the same select foods over and over?
- Are you more concerned about taste, cooking time or nourishment when selecting a food?
- How many different food groups in the food pyramid do you select from each day?
- How many different colors are represented in the foods in your daily diet?

According to the American Dietetic Association, the average person routinely plans meals around the same 10 to 15 core foods. Despite the fact that we live in a society with thousands of food choices in our local supermarkets, most of us are in a rut. Good nutrition and health is dependent on us eating a variety of foods, so broaden your diet. Try one new food each week. Experiment with new recipes. When offered, taste “samples” to try new foods.

The American Dietetic Association also reports that taste, smell and touch make up a food’s flavor, and flavor is a priority for our food choices. The foods we enjoy are the ones we are more likely to eat most often. In order to get the most flavor from foods and enhance your nutrient intake, eat foods when they’re at peak freshness, include a variety of foods with different flavors at a single meal to stimulate your taste buds, and chew your food thoroughly to release its taste and aroma.

The Missouri Department of Health and Human Services (DHSS) recommends eating foods from each of the six food groups in the food pyramid. A nutritionally balanced diet provides weight control, stronger muscles and bones, and balanced nutrition to help prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

The Produce for Better Health Foundation recommends eating five or more servings of colorful fruits and vegetables each day. Deeply hued fruits and vegetables provide a wide range of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytochemicals to help your body maintain good health and energy levels, protect against the effects of aging, and reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease.

What we eat determines who we are, how we feel and how we are able to function in daily life. Today almost two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese. Do your part today to change those statistics. Start by making better food choices. For more information on nutrition, contact the Springfield-Greene County Health Department, or go online to one of the following Web sites:

[www.healthierus.gov](http://www.healthierus.gov) (2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans)

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) (American Dietetic Association)

[www.5aday.com](http://www.5aday.com) (Produce for Better Health Foundation)